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017

STAR WARS DARTH VADER

Book III, Part II

THE SHU-TORUN WAR

It is a time of rebuilding for the Empire. After the Death Star's destruction, Darth Vader, the Emperor's chief enforcer, struggled to keep his place after he was seemingly pitted against the operatives of the cyborg specialist, Cylo.

To regain allegiance from the planet Shu-Torun, Vader assassinated the royal family and placed its youngest daughter, Trios, on the throne. Nevertheless, talk of rebellion persisted. Tasked to intervene, Vader brought further destruction to the ore-rich planet and promised more if submission was not given.

Meanwhile, Vader's secret ally, Dr. Aphra, remains in the hands of rebels, and the Dark Lord has issued a bounty for her recovery....

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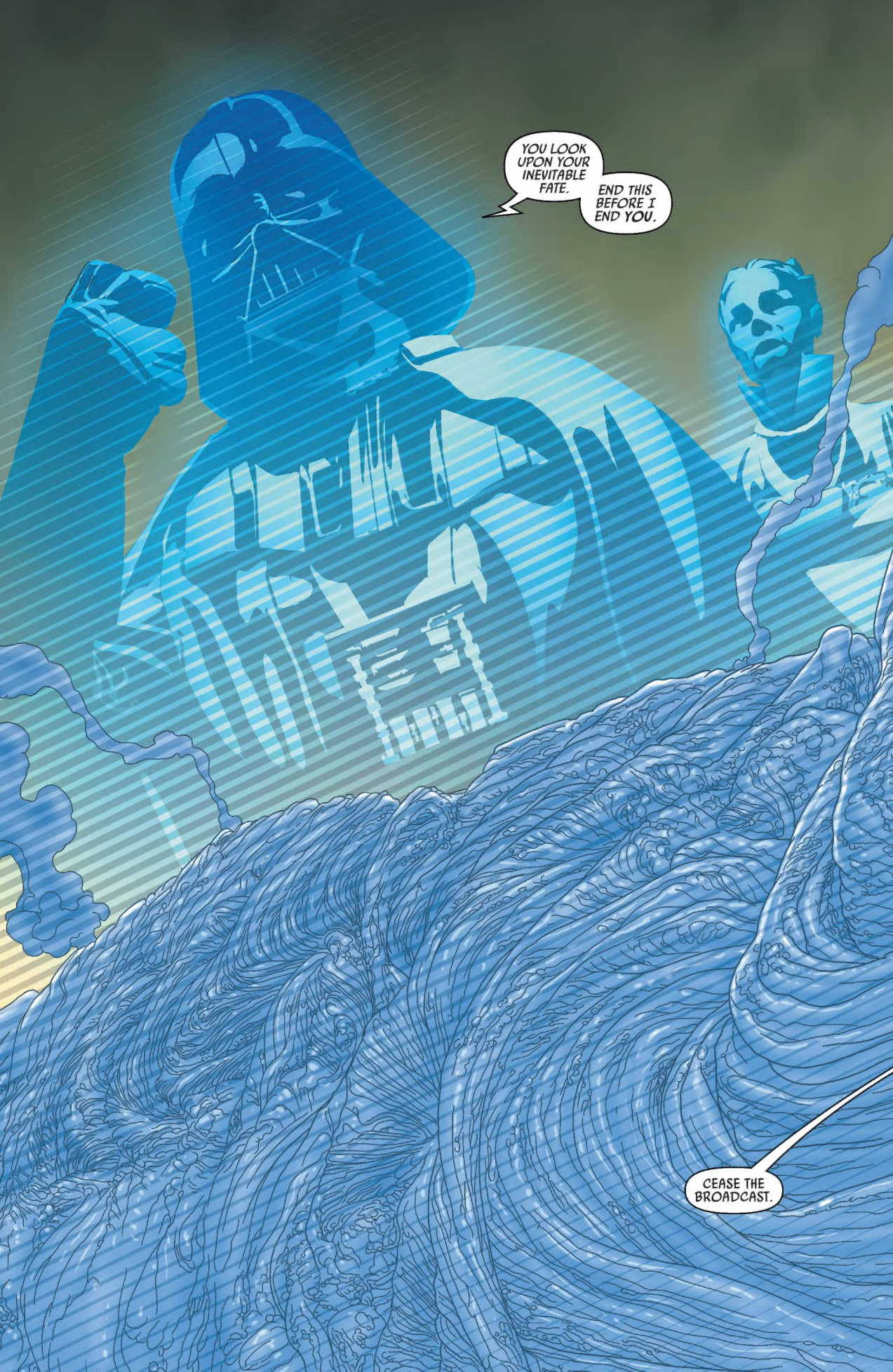
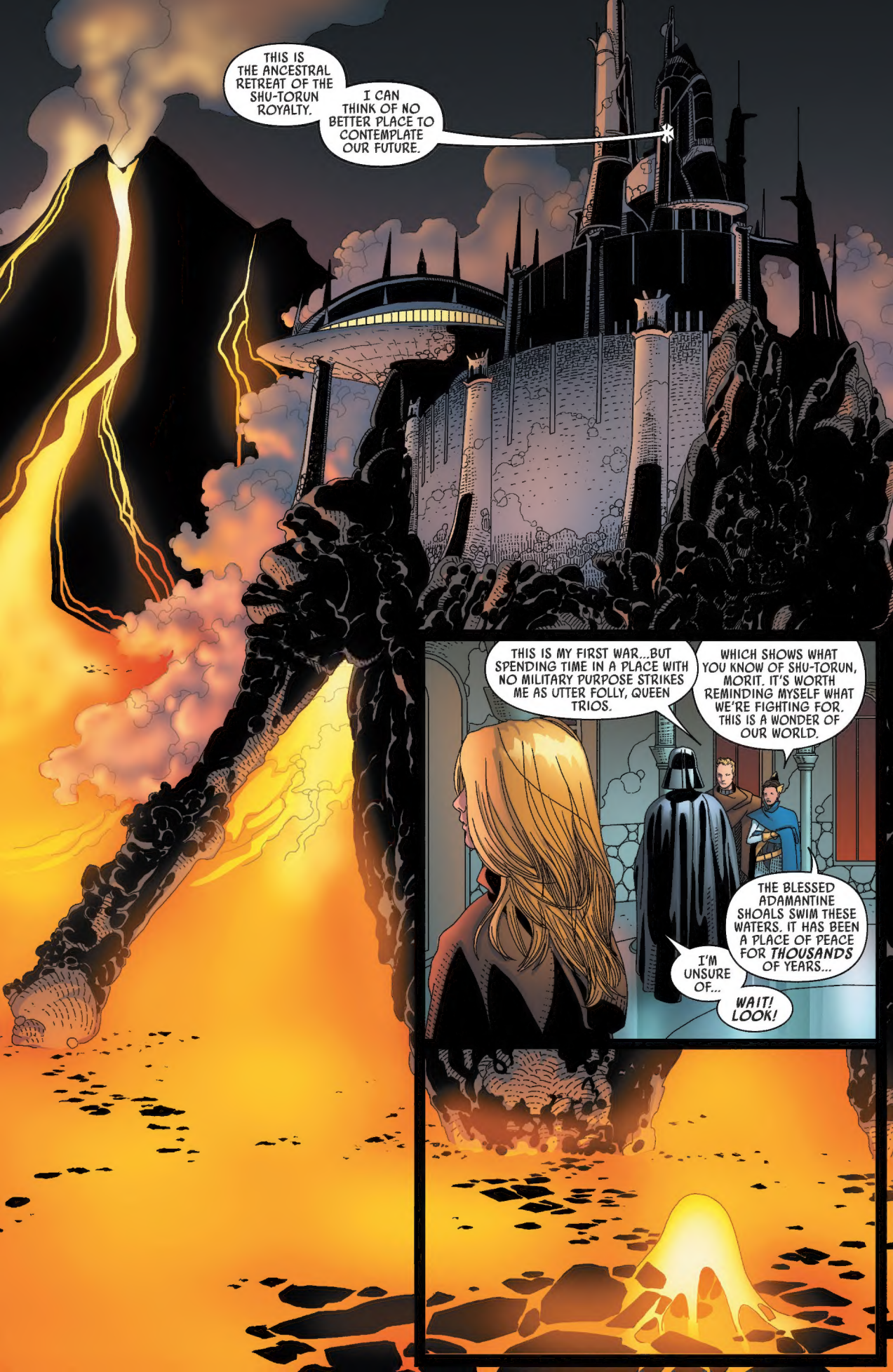

YOU LOOK UPON YOUR INEVITABLE FATE.
END THIS BEFORE I END YOU.
CEASE THE BROADCAST.

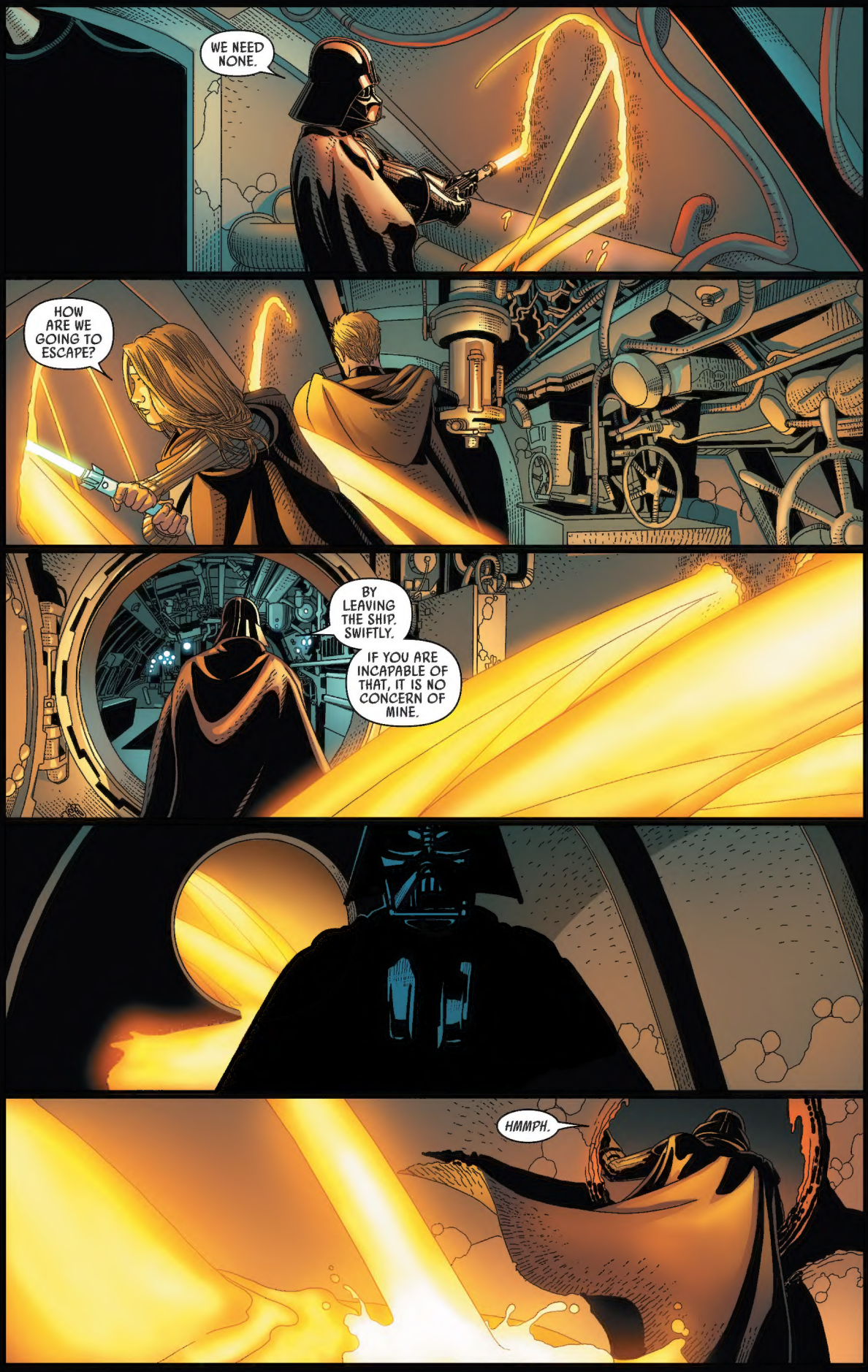
THEY DO NOT UNDERSTAND WHO WE ARE.
WHAT DO WE DO, BARON RUBIX?
THE ORE BARONS HAVE FORGED AND HARDENED PHRIK FOR BONES.
WE BUILD PALACES WHERE OTHERS WOULD STRUGGLE TO EVEN MINE.
HER FATHER UNDERSTOOD THE PROPER ORDER OF THINGS. TRIOS DOESN'T.
THE KING SERVES US. WE PROTECT HIM.
SHE DOES NOT COMPREHEND HOW VULNERABLE SHE IS. SHE IS SAFE ONLY BECAUSE WE DEIGN TO FOLLOW THE RULES...
SHE MUST BE REMINDED.


THIS IS THE ANCESTRAL RETREAT OF THE SHU-TORUN ROYALTY.
I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER PLACE TO CONTEMPLATE OUR FUTURE.
THIS IS MY FIRST WAR...BUT SPENDING TIME IN A PLACE WITH NO MILITARY PURPOSE STRIKES ME AS UTTER FOLLY, QUEEN TRIOS.
WHICH SHOWS WHAT YOU KNOW OF SHU-TORUN, MORIT. IT'S WORTH REMINDING MYSELF WHAT WE'RE FIGHTING FOR. THIS IS A WONDER OF OUR WORLD.
THE BLESSED ADAMANTINE SHOALS SWIM THESE WATERS. IT HAS BEEN A PLACE OF PEACE FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS...
I'M UNSURE OF...
WAIT! LOOK!

THIS IS BLASPHEMY! THAT'S ONE OF RUBIX'S VESSELS.
HE'S OPENED FIRE ON A SACRED SITE!
QUICKLY, MY QUEEN. WE MUST ESCAPE.
ESCAPE?
I THINK NOT.

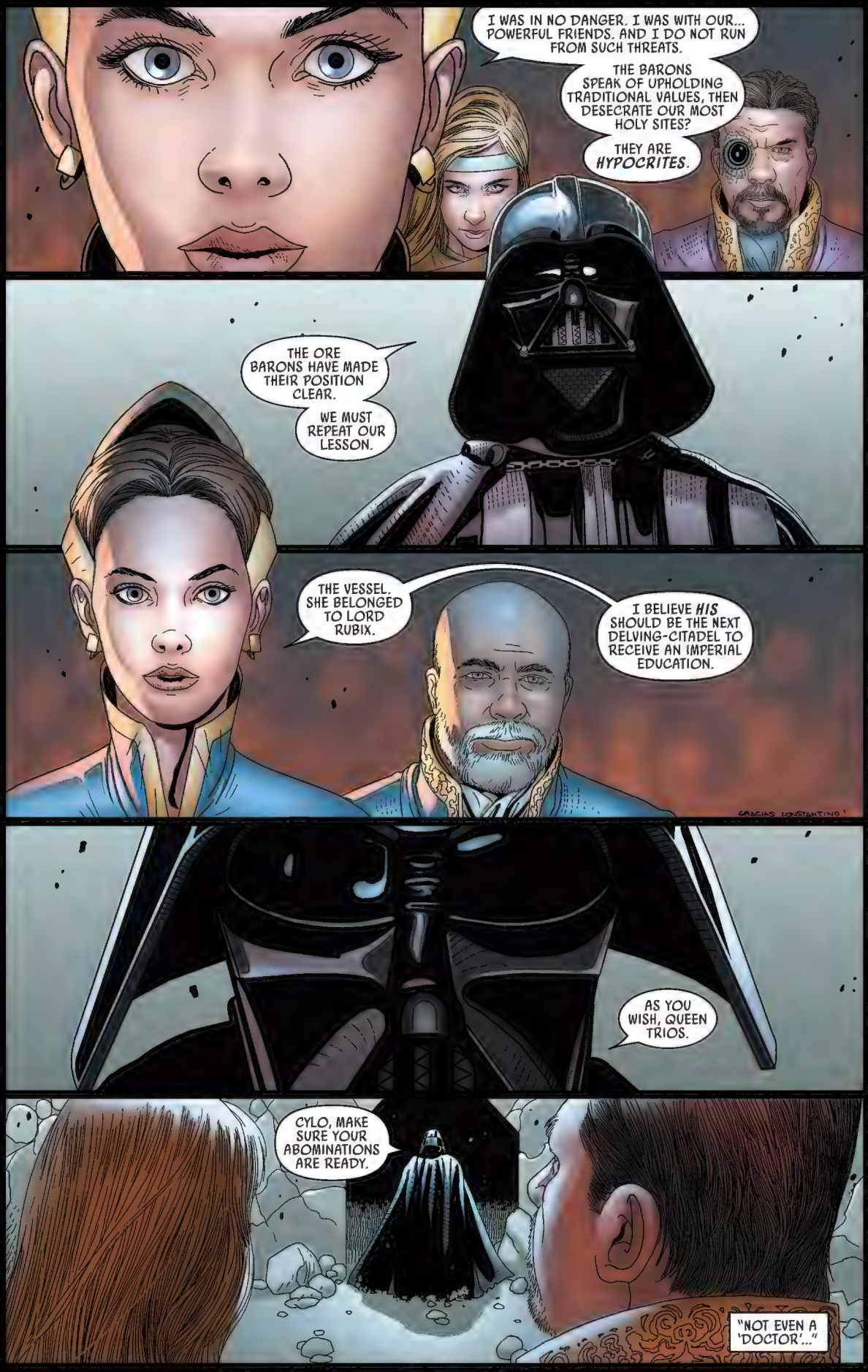
THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPE.
LORD VADER! I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
I AM GOING TO WAR.
WITH ME, TWINS.
IF YOU DARE.

WH--
DESCEND TO THE STARBOARD BASE OF THE HULL. I WILL HEAD TO THE PORT.
DESTROY EVERY BULKHEAD.
I HAVE REACHED THE HULL. ARE YOU READY?
AIOLIN AND I ARE HERE! WHAT CAN WE DO?
WE HAVE NO EXPLOSIVES...


WE NEED NONE.
HOW ARE WE GOING TO ESCAPE?
BY LEAVING THE SHIP. SWIFTLY.
IF YOU ARE INCAPABLE OF THAT, IT IS NO CONCERN OF MINE.
HMMPH.

YOU ARE SWIFTER THAN I THOUGHT.
I KNOW LITTLE OF YOUR PEOPLE'S RELIGION, QUEEN TRIOS...
...BUT I PRESUME THIS IS A SUITABLE PUNISHMENT FOR THEIR SACRILEGE.

MY QUEEN! WHAT IS THIS IDIOCY?! THIS FOOLISHNESS?!
YOU ARE ENDANGERING YOURSELF!
YOUR POSITION IS OF A WAR *LEADER*, AND A *CEREMONIAL* ONE AT THAT, NOT A WARRIOR. TO BE INVOLVED IN SILLY ADVENTURES IS--
CHAMBERLAIN JOOLI, I--
YOUR WORDS PUT YOU IN GREATER DANGER THAN THE QUEEN EVER WAS.
I...I...
THANK YOU, LORD VADER.
I'M SURE JOOLI WAS MERELY SPEAKING IN HIGH SPIRITS.

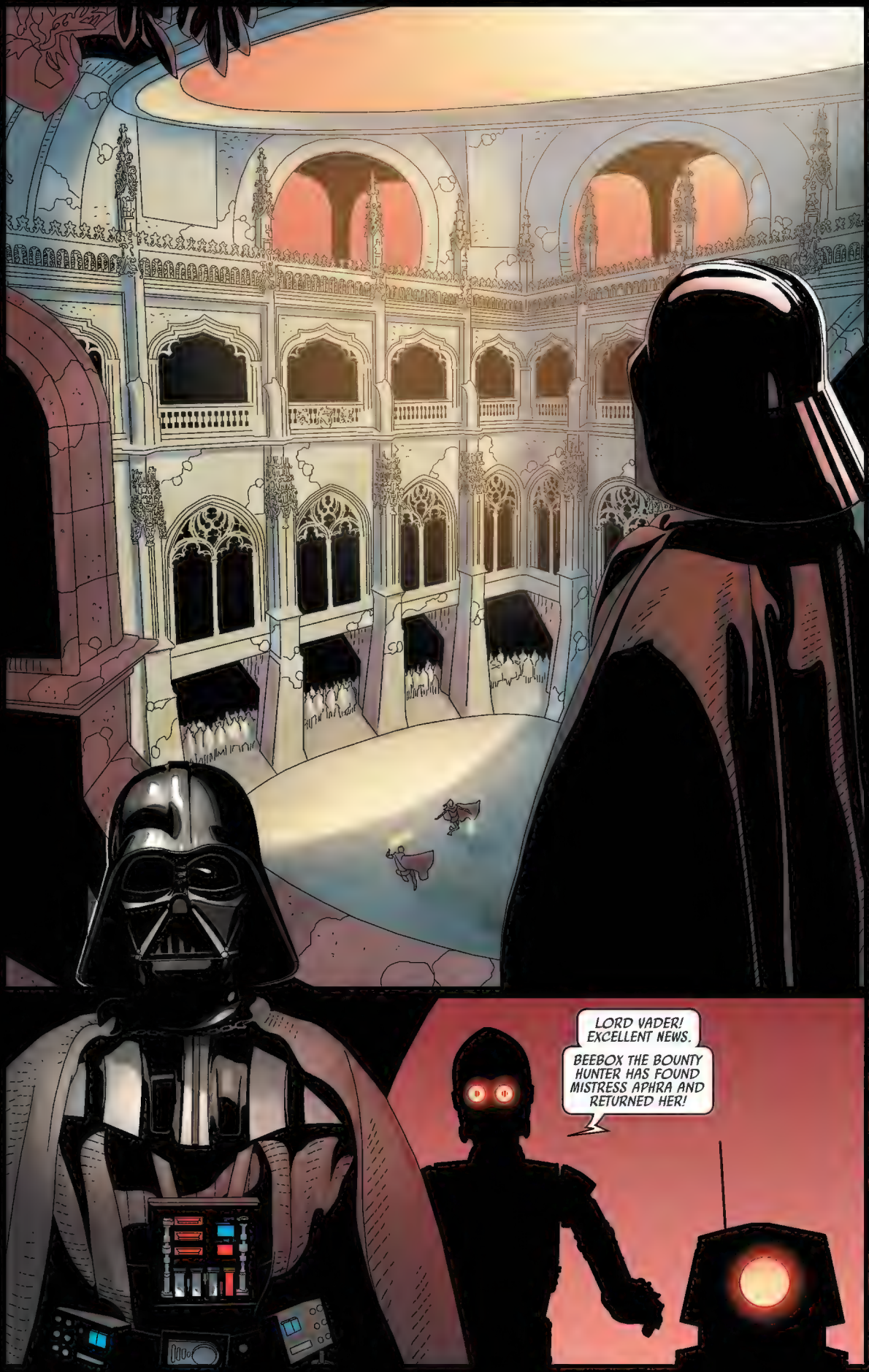

I WAS IN NO DANGER. I WAS WITH OUR... POWERFUL FRIENDS. AND I DO NOT RUN FROM SUCH THREATS.
THE BARONS SPEAK OF UPHOLDING TRADITIONAL VALUES, THEN DESECRATE OUR MOST HOLY SITES?
THEY ARE HYPOCRITES.
THE ORE BARONS HAVE MADE THEIR POSITION CLEAR.
WE MUST REPEAT OUR LESSON.
THE VESSEL. SHE BELONGED TO LORD RUBIX.
I BELIEVE HIS SHOULD BE THE NEXT DELVING-CITADEL TO RECEIVE AN IMPERIAL EDUCATION.
GRACIAS CONSTANTINO!
AS YOU WISH, QUEEN TRIOS.
CYLO, MAKE SURE YOUR ABOMINATIONS ARE READY.
"NOT EVEN A 'DOCTOR'..."

...IF HE KNEW WHAT HE OWED ME, I'D HOPE FOR SOME RESPECT...

I DON'T UNDERSTAND, CYLO.

DON'T WORRY, GRAND GENERAL TAGGE. OLD BUSINESS, IRRELEVANT TO THE WAR ON SHU-TORUN.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE WAR'S PROGRESS?

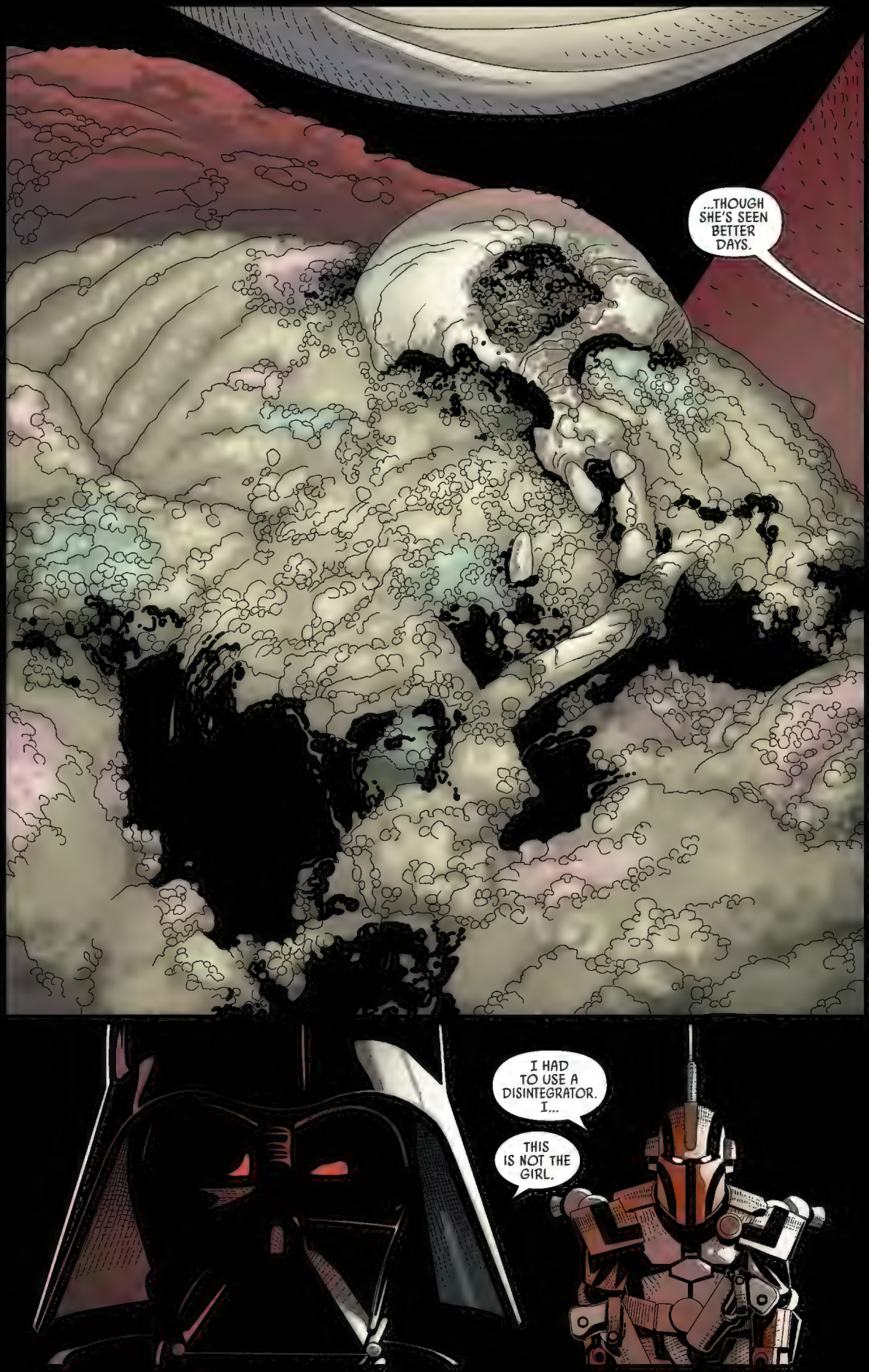
EXACTLY AS FRUSTRATING AS YOU'D EXPECT.
I AM NOT FOOL ENOUGH TO DENY THAT VADER IS GREAT...
...BUT GREAT IS NOT GOOD.
THE STORMING OF THE MAGMA SUBMERSIBLE IS AN EXAMPLE OF HIS MANY FLAWS...
VADER IS NOT EXACTLY OVER-CONFIDENT, BUT YOU CANNOT GAMBLE LIKE HE DOES.
HE WINS GRAND VICTORIES IN THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME I WIN A THOUSAND SMALL ONES.
HE CAN WIN BATTLES, NOT WARS.
CLEARLY, THIS CAMPAIGN MUST END FAVORABLY...
BUT IT WOULD BE GOOD IF IT WAS SEEN THAT IT IS THE EMPIRE WHO TRIUMPHS, NOT VADER.
I WOULD AGREE ENTIRELY, GRAND GENERAL.


LORD VADER! EXCELLENT NEWS.
BEEBOX THE BOUNTY HUNTER HAS FOUND MISTRESS APHRA AND RETURNED HER!

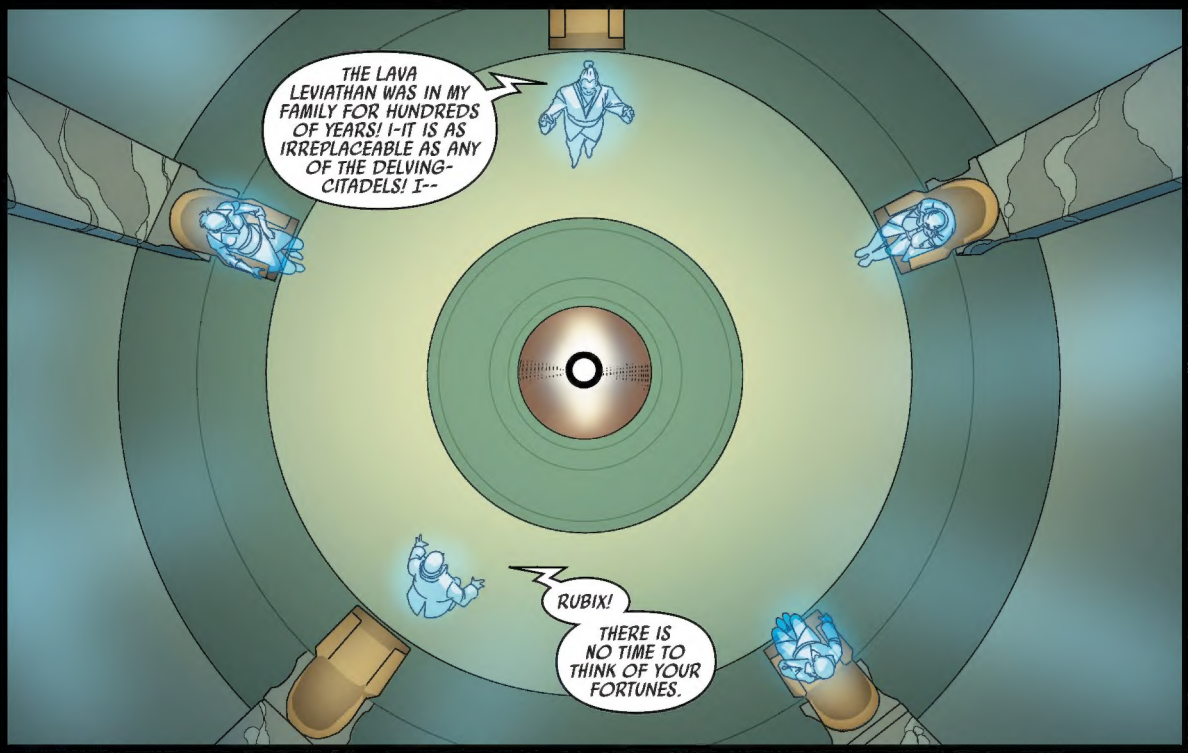
I'VE ARRANGED A PRIVATE AUDIENCE. THEY AWAIT YOUR PLEASURE...
WE WILL QUESTION THEM BOTH NOW.
THAT IS FASCINATING, LORD VADER...
I HAD NO IDEA YOUR POWERS EXTENDED TO COMMUNING WITH THE DEAD.
TAKE ME TO HER.
IMMEDIATELY.
LORD VADER...
WHEN WE FIGHT, WHO WILL WIN?
YOU MISUNDERSTAND.
I WASN'T TALKING ABOUT YOU.
YOUR GAUDY MECHANICAL TRICKERY IS NOTHING COMPARED WITH THE POWER OF THE FORCE.

MY BROTHER AND I.
THERE CAN BE ONLY ONE.
YOU HAVE BEEN SOLD A FANTASY, CHILD.
THERE IS NO FUTURE FOR EITHER OF YOU.
THEN HELP ME. TRAIN ME. SPAR. I WANT TO BE AS GOOD AS I CAN.
I WAS A CHILD WHEN THE JEDI DISAPPEARED. YOU ARE A LIVING ARTIFACT.
IF THOSE TIMES CAN NEVER LIVE AGAIN, LET US HONOR THAT MARTIAL MEMORY AS BEST WE CAN.
THE LESSONS I HAVE TO TEACH WOULD BE OF NO USE TO YOU.
I WILL DO NOTHING FOR YOU.

WHERE IS SHE?
DARTH V-VADER.
I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS YOUR BOUNTY. I...
YOU HAD NO NEED TO.
SHOW ME.
SURE...


...THOUGH SHE'S SEEN BETTER DAYS.
I HAD TO USE A DISINTEGRATOR. I...
THIS IS NOT THE GIRL.

IT IS! I WOULDN'T LIE TO YOU!
I--
YOU WOULD.
YOU DID.
THIS IS NOT A MISTAKE ONE REPEATS, BOUNTY HUNTER.
DISPOSE OF THE BODIES. ENSURE THE OTHERS UNDERSTAND BEEBOX'S MISTAKE.
FIND HER.


THE LAVA LEVIATHAN WAS IN MY FAMILY FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS! I-IT IS AS IRREPLACEABLE AS ANY OF THE DELVING-CITADELS! I--
RUBIX!
THERE IS NO TIME TO THINK OF YOUR FORTUNES.

WHO IS THIS "VADER"? HE ACHIEVES THE IMPOSSIBLE.
HOW CAN WE FIGHT HIM?

WE ARE A PEOPLE OF METAL. WE DEAL WITH THE HARD FACTS OF ORE AND PROFIT. THIS IS... SORCERY.
WE NEED AN EXPERT. I BRING HIM BEFORE YOU...

YOU FIGHT THE EMPIRE.
I'M NOT SURE IF I CAN DELIVER YOU A FINAL VICTORY...

...BUT I CAN GIVE YOU VADER.

DARTH VADER
NEXT ISSUE:

Tour
THE SEVEN SEAS
With
BLACK MANTA
EMPIRE
Call 555-FISH